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## THE EVOLUTION OF PROPERTY FROM SAVAGERY TO CIVILIZATION.

By PAUL LAFARGUE. Pp. 174. London: Swan, Sonnenschein & Co., 1890.

It is but natural that the prevailing, and undoubtedly the correct, modern conception of political economy which views it from the sociological standpoint should become the cause of books like this. The subject could not fail to prove of interest to any economist who pins his faith to induction in the development of his science, and a fairly well-written work upon it would almost of necessity be attractive. It is most certain, however, that the majority of intelligent readers who may chance to examine this essay will find it altogether unsatisfactory. The writer is evidently not incompetent, and had he come to his work without bias, he might have done well; but, as it is, the verdict must be to the contrary.

Lafargue's theory, which is by no means so original as it is claimed to be, is briefly that a primitive tribal communism was succeeded by a "consanguine" collectivism beginning with the family and causing it to change at length from the "matriarchal" to the patriarchal form; and that this collectivism was superseded by feudal property, with its corresponding social organization, which prepared the way for "Bourgeois individualism." Finally comes a prediction, which seems to be in fact a threat, as follows: "Communism exists in a latent form in bourgeois society; circumstances, not to be foreseen, will cause it to burst forth openly, and will reinstate it as the only possible form of future society."

Some of the conclusions stated in this work can be accounted for only as the result of using facts to bolster a preconceived theory. One such conclusion is to be found in this statement: "The term capital, though of Latin origin, has no equivalent in the Greek and Latin tongues. The non-existence of the word in two such rich languages affords a proof that capitalist property did not exist in ancient times, at least as an economical and social phenomenon."

After all possible weight has been given to the argument from the term itself, it is hard to see how the last proposition can be made to comport with the essential fact that interest is an ancient "social phenomenon," and that, in Rome, at least, the struggle against usury seems to have moved almost *pari passu* with the progress of early agrarianism.

The most useful function of a writer whose radical socialism leads him to attack the family as the social unit, is to disgust sober thinkers with his doctrine. That something in this direction has been done in "The Evolution of Property," will easily be seen from such statements as—"the patriarchal family is likewise disintegrated and superseded by the modern family; a sorry remnant, destined, ere long, to disappear," and "The worn-out phrase 'The family is the pillar of the state,' which modern moralists and politicians reiterate *ad nauseam* since it has ceased to be exact, was at one time an adequate expression of the truth." The mischievous spirit of the book, which breaks out in these remarks, is aggravated by a supreme contempt for recognized authorities, showing itself in such expressions as "the Giffens, Roschers, Leroy-Beaulieus, and other such small fry of political economy."

The style of the English translation is, on the whole, good; blemishes like the use of "*restitute*" as a verb for *restore* seem to have been accidental.

To sum up, the book is worth reading only to those who have discrimination enough to understand what is bad in it, and patience enough to glean out the good.

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LECTURES ON THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES. By SAMUEL FREEMAN MILLER, LL.D., late an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. Pp. xxi, 765. New York and Albany: Banks & Brothers, 1891.

This posthumous work of the late Justice Miller is in many respects a notable volume. It is, first of all, the